# Implementation Framework for Bridging Opportunities:

## A Summit on Aboriginal Business Development and Increasing the Aboriginal Workforce

The Premier's Economic Advisory Council

Manitoba 2005

**Premier's Economic Advisory Council**

**648-155 Carlton Street**

**Winnipeg, Manitoba**

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# A message from Manitoba Premier Gary Doer

The November 2004 Bridging Opportunities Summit was a tremendous success. Sponsored by the Premier's Economic Advisory Council it brought together a wide cross-section of Manitobans with a commitment to increasing Aboriginal participation in the Manitoba economy.

It was a result-oriented event, as evidenced by the formal announcement of an Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce at the Summit's closing plenary. Our government welcomed this development and will work with the ACC to enhance business opportunities for Aboriginal people.

To ensure that this sort of momentum was not lost, it was requested that PEAC establish a Summit Results' Implementation Committee. The Committee worked for the past year on a detailed set of recommendations. Based on that report PEAC has prepared this valuable Implementation Framework.

It identifies a series of positive actions that governments, businesses, labour unions, community leaders, and individuals can take to increase Aboriginal participation in the economic life of our province. Our government will be using this document as a guide to its policy in these areas.

The task is not up to government alone - that is why the Framework includes recommendations to the private sector, labour unions, and community organizations - I encourage the leadership from each of these sectors to examine this report and, where appropriate, incorporate its recommendations into their operations.

Finally, I wish to thank all the members of the Premier's Economic Advisory Council, the people who helped organize or participated in the Summit and the Implementation Committee, and the many additional volunteers who participated in this project. Their efforts demonstrate a strong commitment this province and its people.

Sincerely,

Gary Doer

# A Message from the Premier's Economic Advisory Council

The publication of this report marks an ending and a beginning. It marks the end of fruitful period of consultation and discussion, the highlight of which was Bridging Opportunities, the November 2004 Summit on Aboriginal Business Development and Increasing the Aboriginal Workforce.

It also marks the beginning of what we hope will be a period of implementation and progress, as government, business, labour, and community organizations begin to make use of the recommended positive actions contained in this Implementation Framework.

It has been an exciting and gratifying experience to see so many extremely busy Manitobans give so freely of their time to discuss strategies for strengthening the participation of Aboriginal people in the Manitoba economy.

The energy and dedication that all of these people committed to this project gives us optimism that significant strides will be made in coming years.

We wish to also stress the tremendous benefits that all the participants in this process have gained from having the opportunity to work together. We have all had our eyes opened to new partnership opportunities and new challenges. Much progress has already occurred over the past year, from the creation of the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce to the rapid increase in the number of new Aboriginal businesses coming forward to bid on public and private sector contracts. The Aboriginal businesses involved in the upcoming Manitoba Floodway project are a sign of the changing business climate in this province. It is encouraging to see so many Aboriginal entrepreneurs creating new businesses across the province.

Those who take up the challenge laid down by this report will similarly find themselves rewarded as they build bridges to new opportunities.

This Implementation Framework identifies some steps to be taken to foster Aboriginal enterprises and create a truly representative workforce in our province. Manitobans have already started to take important steps in both of these areas—this framework document builds on what has been done to date and identifies positive steps that need to be taken next.

On behalf of the Premier's Economic Advisory Council, we wish to express our appreciation to all individuals who volunteered their time at the Summit, the pre-Summit stakeholder consultation process, the summit steering committee and the subsequent implementation process.

We also wish to thank Manitoba Premier Gary Doer for his confidence and support.

**Ekosi. Meegwetch. Thank you. Merci.**

**Bob Silver**

**Robert Ziegler**

**Co-chairs of the Premier's Economic Advisory Council**

**Elaine Cowan**

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# Executive Summary

Based on the work of the Summit Results Implementation Committee, the Premier's Economic Advisory Council has developed an Implementation Framework for the outcome of Bridging Opportunities: A Summit on Aboriginal Business Development and Increasing the Aboriginal Workforce.

The Framework consists of positive actions to be taken under the following headings. (Figures 1, 2, and 3 are a graphic illustration of the framework.)

### 1) Increasing Aboriginal Business Development

Preconditions to further Aboriginal entrepreneurial success

Fostering Aboriginal businesses

### 2) Creating a Representative Workforce

Training

Recruiting and retaining Aboriginal workers

The need for improved cross-cultural awareness

### 3) Reviewing Provincial Government Programs and Monitoring Progress

A review of current Manitoba government Aboriginal business development and employment programs

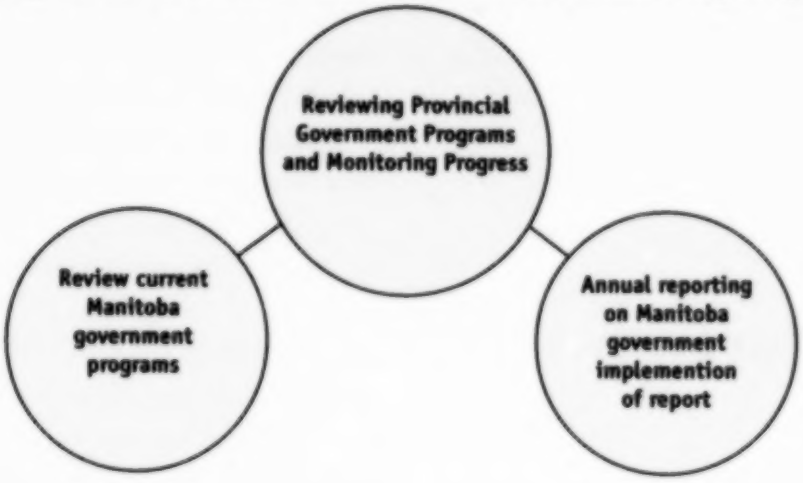
Annual reporting on Manitoba government progress in implementing the measures identified in this report.

Under each of these headings the report describes the issues and recommends specific positive actions that different sectors of the Manitoba economy can take to assist in the development of Aboriginal businesses and the creation of a representative workforce.

**Figure 1. Increasing Aboriginal Business Development**

**Figure 2. Creating a Representative Workforce**

**Figure 3. Reviewing Provincial Government Programs and Monitoring Progress**


Reviewing Provincial Government Programs and Monitoring Progress
Review current Manitoba government programs
Annual reporting on Manitoba government implemention of report

# 1 Introduction

On November 2-3, 2004, the Premier's Economic Advisory Council (PEAC) hosted Bridging Opportunities: A Summit on Aboriginal Business Development and Increasing the Aboriginal Workforce. In all respects, the Summit was considered to be a major success, generating valuable public input from over 200 people on how to enhance Aboriginal economic development and build a representative workforce. Feedback provided from participants indicated that they were pleased with the Summit's outcome, but wished to see steps taken to implement measures raised at the summit.

Manitoba Premier Gary Doer asked PEAC to form a Summit Results Implementation Committee to develop recommendations as part of a strategy to leverage business and economic development and create a more representative workforce. Daniel Paul Bork, the co-chair of the Summit Steering Committee chaired the implementation committee, which presented its report to the Manitoba government in September 2005.

The Summit itself served as the catalyst for the establishment of a Manitoba Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce (ACC). The preparation for the Summit brought together many of the leaders of the Aboriginal business community, who had been talking about the need for such an organization for a decade. It was on the final day of the Summit that the establishment of the Manitoba Aboriginal Chamber was officially announced. The ACC is an important new participant in the Manitoba economic community and its members played key roles in both the Summit and the work of the follow-up implementation committee. PEAC believes that the organization will continue to play an important role in the evolution of Aboriginal economic development in Manitoba.

This document builds on both the Summit and the work of the Summit Results Implementation Committee to establish an

Implementation Framework for the work done to date. The two main sections of the document deal with Increasing Aboriginal Business Development and Creating a Representative Workforce. In each section, the key issues outlined and positive actions for government, Aboriginal organizations, and the private sector are described. The report concludes with overarching recommendations to the Manitoba government to conduct a review of its current Aboriginal business development and employment programs and to require provincial departments to make regular reports on measures relating to Aboriginal development and Aboriginal employment.

Through the Summit and the work of the Implementation Committee, stress was laid on the need to celebrate success. It is extremely important to recognize that many of the key trends involving the integration of Aboriginal people into the broader Manitoba economy have been positive and are reviewed below. This report seeks to build on those successes and lay the groundwork for an acceleration of those positive trends by identifying the positive measures that different actors in the Manitoba economy can play in this important and crucial task.

# 2 Statistical Background

## 2.1 Manitoba's Aboriginal population

The Manitoba Bureau of Statistics estimates that as of July 1, 2005, Manitoba's Aboriginal community was 172,654. This community was made up of 108,417 Registered Indians, 56,469 Métis and Not Registered persons, and 7,768 Other Aboriginals Not Registered. This represented a 6.6 per cent increase since 2001. During the same period the non-Aboriginal population grew by 0.8 per cent.

From 2004 to 2017, it is expected that the Aboriginal population will increase by 29.4 per cent. This would bring it to 17.1 per cent of Manitoba's population, up from 14.1 per cent in 2005. In Northern Manitoba, Aboriginal people would account for 85 per cent of the population, up from the current 77 per cent. In Winnipeg, it would increase from 9 per cent to 10.5 per cent, and in other locations from 11.1 per cent to 14.4 per cent.

In 2004, approximately 33.8 per cent of Manitoba's Aboriginal community resided in Winnipeg, 38.3 per cent in Northern Manitoba, and 27.9 per cent in other areas. By 2017 the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics projects that this will be 34.9 per cent in Winnipeg, 34.4 per cent in Northern Manitoba, and 30.7 in other areas.

The 65+ age group will increase by 90.3 per cent, 55-64 by 87.4 per cent, 45-55 by 54.6 per cent, 25-44 by 16.1 per cent, 15-24 by 29.2 per cent, and 0-14 by 18.8 per cent. While the growth rates for the older portions of the population are high, the Manitoba Aboriginal population is and will remain for a considerable period of time, younger than the overall Manitoba population. The median age of the total Aboriginal population was 23.6 in 2004 and is projected to be 25.4 in 2017.

The median for the non-Aboriginal population was 40 in 2004 and is projected to be 41 in 2017. In 2001 nearly 1 in every 4 Manitobans aged 0 to 14 was Aboriginal, by 2017 this will increase

to 1 in 3. On the basis of this growth it can be expected that one of every four new entrants to the Manitoba labour market in 2017 will be Aboriginal.

## 2.2 Aboriginal people and the Manitoba economy

In 2001, the Aboriginal labour force participation rate was 59 percent, the employment rate was 47.8 per cent, and the unemployment rate was 19 per cent. The comparable numbers for Manitoba as a whole were 67.3 per cent, 63.3 per cent, and 6.1 per cent. The 1996 Aboriginal labour force participation rate was 54 per cent, the employment rate was 40.2 per cent and the unemployment rate was 25.5 per cent (for the total Manitoba workforce, the figures were 66.3 per cent, 61.1 per cent, and 7.9 per cent.) Aboriginal labour force participation is increasing, as is the Aboriginal employment rate.

The average employment income for Aboriginal persons in Manitoba in 2001 was $19,271 and for Manitobans as a whole $27,178. The comparable figures for 1996 were $15,659 and $23,143. Aboriginal income is increasing, all though it is considerably below the provincial average.

The Aboriginal workforce is not heterogeneous. In 2001, 3,225 Aboriginal people worked in management positions, 7,730 worked in business, finance, and administration occupations, 2, 395 worked in health occupations, 5,320 worked in social science, education, government service, and regional government, 15,700 worked in sales and services, and 10,120 worked in trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations.

In 2001, 5.9 per cent of the Aboriginal workforce—representing 3,465 Aboriginal people—was self employed, compared to 12.3 per cent of the entire Manitoba workforce. In 1996, 6.2 per cent of the Aboriginal workforce—representing 2,355 Aboriginal people—were self-employed. In that year 14 per cent of the entire Manitoba workforce was self-employed. In short, Aboriginal self-employment is increasing.

## 2.3 Aboriginal people and education attainment in Manitoba

In 2001, of the Aboriginal population 15 years and older, 17.5 per cent had less than Grade 9, 38.5 had not completed high school, while 13.2 had attended university. The figures for the entire Manitoba population were 10.4 per cent, 27.8 per cent, and 25.1 per cent. Of the Aboriginal population aged 15-24, 53.1 per cent were not attending school, 41.1 per cent were attending school full time, and 5.8 per cent were attending school part time. The comparable figures for the Manitoba population as a whole were 44.8 per cent, 48.7 per cent, and 6.5 per cent. In 1996 of the Aboriginal population 15 years and older, 22.9 per cent had less than Grade 9, 39.0 had not completed high school, while 10.6 had attended university. The figures

for the entire Manitoba population were 12.6 per cent, 28.8 per cent, and 23.1 per cent. Of the Aboriginal population aged 15-24, 55.8 per cent were not attending school, 39.5 per cent were attending school full time, and 4.7 per cent were attending school part time.

## 2.4 Summary

There are a number of significant observations that arise from this information:

- Over the past decade Aboriginal employment rates and rates of educational attainment have all been rising. While the self-employment rate has not been rising, the number of self-employed Aboriginal people has increased during this period. These accomplishments are due first and foremost to the efforts of Aboriginal people themselves, who have seized opportunities and in many cases created their own opportunities. The Aboriginal community represents a potential source of tremendous vitality for the Manitoba economy.
- Aboriginal hiring will have to increase dramatically in coming years to simply maintain the current Aboriginal employment rate.
- While there is considerable interest in self-employment among Aboriginal people, the level of self-employment is considerably below the level for the Manitoba population as a whole. An increase in this level would create Aboriginal businesses that could increase the level of Aboriginal employment in the province.

The barriers that have hindered the full participation in the Manitoba economy are numerous and complex. They arise from history and geography, from social attitudes and the restrictive regulations, policies of isolation and integration, poverty and systemic racism. These barriers can be most effectively dismantled through the efforts of individuals and organizations on both sides of the barriers. Many people and organizations, particularly Aboriginal people and organizations, have put considerable effort to date into this work—their accomplishments have given us much to build on.

This Implementation Framework outlines a series of positive actions that various participants in the Manitoba economy can undertake. The Premiers Economic Advisory Council wishes to make it clear that these are not the only positive actions that need to be taken or that are being taken. It offers them as complements to the important work being done in Aboriginal health, education, training, business and community development by many organizations and individuals both public and private.

# 3 Increasing Aboriginal Business Development

In the last decade there has been a rapid growth in Aboriginal entrepreneurship across Canada. From 1996 to 2001, the number of self-employed Aboriginal people increased by 30.7 per cent, a rate that is nine times higher for self-employed Canadians overall. Fifty-two per cent of these self-employed Aboriginal people lived in urban areas and 48 per cent lived in rural areas. A quarter of them were under the age of 25.

A 2002 Industry Canada survey of Aboriginal entrepreneurs across Canada showed that two-thirds had increased profits and revenues in 2002. Seventy per cent of the Aboriginal businesses surveyed in Manitoba by Industry Canada were operated by a sole proprietor. While only 30 per cent had more than one full-time employee, 70 per cent of the full-time employees of Aboriginal entrepreneurs were Aboriginal people.

Over 75 per cent of the Manitoba businesses started by Aboriginal entrepreneurs were started with less than $50,000. Despite this, 40 per cent of the entrepreneurs had to borrow over half of their start-up funds.

In Manitoba, Aboriginal entrepreneurs were present in primary industry, construction, manufacturing, transportation, and warehousing, the wholesale and retail trade, arts, entertainment, accommodation, food, and culture, and the service sector.

It is clear from the above that a growing number of Aboriginal people are creating their own businesses and as those businesses grow they are providing employment for other Aboriginal people. They have the potential to have significant positive impact on local economies throughout the province. For these reasons, Action to Increase Aboriginal Business Development was a key theme of the Bridging Opportunities Summit and this framework document. (Statistics Canada Aboriginal Entrepreneurs Survey 2002)

Efforts to encourage continued growth of the Aboriginal private sector are discussed below under two headings: 1) preconditions for further Aboriginal entrepreneurial success and 2) Fostering Aboriginal businesses.

## 3.1 Preconditions to further Aboriginal entrepreneurial success

### 3.1.1 Treaty Land Entitlement

A key step to improving Aboriginal participation it the Manitoba economy is the resolution of outstanding treaty land entitlement (TLE) claims. When First Nations signed treaties with the Government of Canada—often well over 100 years ago—they were promised reserves based on the population of each First Nation. In many cases however, Canada never assigned the land to the First Nations. The Treaty Land Entitlement Agreement confirmed that 1,200,000 acres of land in Manitoba was owed to these First Nations.

The land and the associated resources constitute an important part of any Aboriginal economic strategy. A TLE process has been negotiated and currently about 500 land selections are in the transfer process. This remains a very slow procedure. Following site selection by the First Nation, both Canada and Manitoba must agree on the lands to be transferred. The land must also be surveyed and cleared of encumbrances. Requirements to have federal government decisions made by senior officials in Ottawa, along with a shortage of surveyors, continues to complicate the process. This process can be further complicated by the need for negotiations with adjacent municipalities. For these reasons the provincial Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs has made made fast-tracking treaty land entitlement a departmental priority.

These delays have prevented First Nations from going ahead with plans for developing the land or using it as a basis for other economic development. The delay in resolution of the treaty land entitlements is harmful not only to bands but to business development in Manitoba.

#### Positive Action

Federal, provincial, and municipal governments should take steps to fast-track this process, ensuring that regional officials have the authority they need to reach agreements and that sufficient resources are in place to speed the selection process along. All levels of government must work co-operatively to facilitate conversion of properties. There is also a need for all parties to explain to the public the historical background to the TLE process.

### 3.1.2 Natural resources

Manitoba's First Nations expected that the treaties that they signed over 100 years ago would be treaties of friendship and sharing, including the sharing of natural resources. Unfortunately, for much of Manitoba's history, natural resources were developed with little attention being paid to the interests of

Aboriginal people. Historically, employment levels of Aboriginal people in natural resource development have been very low. As a result, co-management agreements and partnerships are being promoted as more effective tools for addressing Aboriginal concerns in relation to natural resource use. Numerous co-management agreements have been or are being developed, including provincial agreements with the West Region Tribal Council (WRTC), Opaskwayak Cree Nation (OCN) and the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF), the Swampy Cree Tribal Council (SCTC) agreement on forestry and the proposed agreement between Manitoba Hydro and the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation for the development of the Wuskwatim generating station. These co-operative arrangements can strengthen local economies and provide Aboriginal people with training and employment.

### Positive action

Further cooperative agreements with Aboriginal peoples regarding the management and development of northern natural resources can play an important role in expanding Aboriginal community and businesses development and employment and represent a positive model for future resource development.

### 3.1.3 Infrastructure

It is commonplace to speak of how technological innovation has created a globalized economy and levelled the economic playing field. But the information technology revolution has yet to reach many Aboriginal communities and, due to their geographical isolation, the playing field remains tilted against them. In many communities, the only Internet access is by dial-up and the cost of fuel and supplies is dramatically affected by transportation costs.

Today, both the public and the private sector provide the infrastructure that business depends on, and responsibilities for supplying and regulating those services are split between both the federal and provincial governments. There has been considerable investment in roads and airports in northern communities in recent years, including stabilization of energy costs and improvement of supply routes, but infrastructure barriers remain in place. Further investment in such projects can yield long-term benefits and cost savings by creating the opportunity for economic development.

### Positive action

Many Aboriginal communities and enterprises that were once considered completely isolated are tantalizingly close to being plugged into the global economy. Cooperative partnerships between the public and private sectors are encouraged to continue to reduce geographic and technological barriers and the costs created by those barriers. Priority areas for such partnerships would be in the energy, transportation, and communication sectors.

### 3.1.4 Teaching entrepreneurial skills

Summit participants identified a need for an increase in the business-related education

that is provided to Aboriginal students. Junior Achievement of Manitoba, an affiliate of the international Junior Achievement organization, currently provides business education programs to Manitoba students at over 175 schools. Through the support of the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) and the North Central Community Futures Development Corporation many of these programs are offered in rural and northern settings, including a number of First Nations communities. It has also offered programming in the City of Winnipeg that is specifically targeted towards Aboriginal students. The demand for Junior Achievement of Manitoba programming, which is delivered by volunteers, exceeds the number of programs the organization can support.

The provincially funded Northern Forest Diversification Centre (NFDC) works with marginalized forest communities and individuals who are looking to develop economic opportunities. The NFDC acts as a research, training, marketing, sales and service center for the provincial Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) industry. The Centre offers a ten-day community based training course focusing on local resources, plant identification and basic ecology, sustainable harvesting and handling practices, Aboriginal issues, low-tech value added processing, and marketing. The NFDC has over 350 harvesters from over 25 communities and assists interested producers to develop their own markets.

### Positive Action

Junior Achievement is funded by both the public and private sectors and its programs are delivered by volunteers, generally from local business communities. Increases in funding, particularly from the private sector, would allow the organization to provide additional targeted and general programming. An increase in volunteers from the business community, particularly the Aboriginal business community, would assist the organization in further increasing the level of business education that it provides to young Aboriginal people. Given that both the NFDC and Junior Achievement have a focus on entrepreneurial training for young people, the NFDC could consider incorporating Junior Achievement programming into its work.

## 3.2 Fostering Aboriginal businesses

### 3.2.1 Procurement

The most direct and effective way to support an Aboriginal business is to purchase its goods and services. Doing business with Aboriginal businesses strengthens the Aboriginal business sector and creates stronger ties between the non-Aboriginal public and private sectors and the Aboriginal business sector. While no studies exist for Manitoba, studies of the experiences of minority-owned businesses in the United States and Aboriginal-owned businesses in Canada, indicate that historically these groups are under-

represented in the firms seeking and receiving federal government contracts. In response, both the US and Canadian governments have developed targeted procurement programs. The goals of these programs include:

- Assisting small disadvantaged businesses in developing the resources to penetrate private markets.
- Building a stronger economy by tapping the entrepreneurial talents and drive of all segments of the population.
- Increasing employment and economic development in economically distressed communities.

The Government of Canada's Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business (PSAB) hade a number of distinct elements that include:

- Setting contracts that serve a primarily Aboriginal population and that are worth more than $5,000 for competition among qualified Aboriginal businesses. In addition, the government encourages federal buyers to set aside other contracts for competition among Aboriginal businesses whenever practical.
- Measures that encourage Aboriginal firms to create joint ventures to bid on government contracts.
- Encouragement to contractors to sub-contract work with Aboriginal businesses.

Under this program an Aboriginal business is one where at least 51 per cent of the firm is owned and controlled by Aboriginal people. If the firm has more than five employees, one third of the staff must also be Aboriginal. In the process the federal government has established a registry of Aboriginal businesses.

The Manitoba government has established an Aboriginal Procurement Initiative as a part of its Sustainable Development Procurement Goals.

In relation to this issue, a number of provincial departments have established measures such as set asides. A number of useful resources have been created, including a 96-page Aboriginal Business Directory for Manitoba which is available at www.gov.mb.ca/gs/psb/ABR.pdf.

The establishment of the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce is resulting in the creation of another data base that purchasers, both in the public and private sector, can use to identify potential Aboriginal suppliers.

The Manitoba government is not the only purchaser of goods and services in Manitoba. All public and private sector organizations, including Aboriginal organizations, can play an important role in assisting in the development of an Aboriginal business sector by developing their own Aboriginal procurement policies.

## Positive Action

The provincial government can demonstrate important leadership on this issue by ensuring that its Aboriginal Procurement Initiative, while continuing to meet the principles of

fairness, openness, and best value, includes:

- specific set asides for Aboriginal businesses (particularly where there is a large Aboriginal client-base) for capital, supply, and service contracts.
- requirements that a portion of large contracts have an Aboriginal Content. Potential ways of achieving this include the use of Aboriginal business as either the main contractor or as sub-contractors to provide goods, services, construction, equipment, labour, or any combination of these.
- a process that breaks down contracts into smaller or specialized work packages to better suit the capability of Aboriginal businesses.
- public reporting on the percentage of contracts awarded to Aboriginal businesses

To be successful, there must be clear, achievable targets, public reporting on progress towards meeting those targets, and internal promotion of the procurement program.

Following on government leadership in this area, and making use of government registration of Aboriginal businesses, other levels of government in Manitoba—including First Nations' governments—and the private sector can develop their own Aboriginal procurement programs.

Aboriginal entrepreneurs can assist in the process by registering with the Manitoba government's Aboriginal Procurement Initiative and by participating in the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce.

Since this is an issue that has the potential of generating public confusion, the broader business community can play a positive role by explaining the rationale and benefits of an Aboriginal procurement program.

### 3.2.2 Access to Capital

Raising and retaining investment is one of the key elements in the Manitoba government's *Action Strategy for Economic Growth*, and PEAC has noted that "Local investing has the potential to deliver return and diversification benefits to Manitoba Pension and other institutional funds." Not surprisingly the issue of raising and retaining investment is also a key component in any successful Aboriginal economic strategy.

Many new businesses, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal are high-risk investments. To get off the ground they need support from investors who are willing to take a risk on a new company that is prepared to chart a new path. This money can come from either a venture capital fund or an angel investor. Historically, Aboriginal entrepreneurs have been hindered by a lack of lender familiarity with Aboriginal people as clients and by *Indian Act* regulations that prohibited First Nations people from using most of their assets as collateral for personal or business loans.

While the federal government has recently

announced its decision to eliminate three Indian and Northern Affairs Canada programs (the Economic Development Opportunity Fund, the Resource Acquisition Initiative, and the Major Business Projects Program) that fund to First Nation-owned businesses, the federal Aboriginal Business Canada continues to provide start-up and expansion grants to Aboriginal-owned businesses.

The federal government's Aboriginal Capital Corporation (ACC) program funds three Aboriginal Capital Corporations in Manitoba:

- Tribal Wi-Chi-Way Win Capital Corporation
- Anishinabe Mazaska Capital Corporation
- Louis Riel Capital Corporation

The First Nations Bank offers a micro-loan program while the Business Development Bank of Canada offers growth capital for Aboriginal businesses. The federal government's Western Economic Diversification Program funds six Community Futures Development Corporations that are either Aboriginal specific or have an Aboriginal focus.

The Tribal Council Investment Group is owned by the seven Manitoba Tribal Councils and non-affiliated First Nations.

The Manitoba government's Communities Economic Development Fund provides loans to Aboriginal-owned businesses (although not all its clientele is Aboriginal). CEDF also has a fisheries loan program and a micro-loan program for northern communities. The province also makes loans available to businesses through its Business Start Program and its Rural Entrepreneurial Assistance program. (The latter program is not available to businesses operation on First Nations reserve lands.) While it is not specifically targeted to Aboriginal businesses, Aboriginal-owned businesses that are not operating within First Nation reserve lands are eligible for Government of Manitoba Rural Economic Development Initiative grants.

## Venture capital

Despite the developments listed above, there is still a considerable gap when it comes to the availability of venture capital. A venture capital fund that targeted investment in the start-up of small and medium size enterprises with strong growth potential can play an important role in leveraging commercial investment. A study conducted for the Manitoba Government's Economic Innovation and Technology Council (EITC) in 1999 concluded that financing sources for Aboriginal business proposals requiring more than $500,000 were severely limited. The study also concluded that a strong case could be made for an Aboriginal Capital Fund created with the participation of the federal and provincial government, the private sector, and Aboriginal organizations and that there were a sufficient number of Aboriginal investment opportunities to justify the creation of such a fund. It proposed the creation of a $20-million fund with an equal contribution from each of the four stakeholder groups.

Such a fund could be used to support:

- expansion and modernization of existing facilities
- acquisition of new or existing businesses
- management/employee buyouts
- joint ventures
- start-up of Aboriginal businesses

Through pension funds and labour-sponsored investment funds, the labour movement also plays a growing role in investment in Canada. Unions are also becoming more involved in co-managing pension funds. In the process, unions are looking for ways to strengthen local economies.

## Angel investors

Like all entrepreneurs, Aboriginal entrepreneurs can often held by back by a lack of management skills or the absence of a detailed business plan. These are situations when the presence of an angel investor can make a significant difference. An angel investor usually has a high-net worth and is prepared to take a hands-on interest in the company, helping with the business plan and providing management skills.

Linking angels and entrepreneurs is not easily done, particularly since there are more entrepreneurial ideas out there than there are angels. Manitoba has two recently formed angel investor networks: the Winnipeg Angel Organization (WAO) and the Manitoba Angel Investor Network (MAIN).

## Bonding

Another issue that was identified through the Summit process was the way that requirements for performance bonds prevents small but experienced Aboriginal firms from bidding on Manitoba government jobs, particularly construction jobs. The Communities Economic Development Fund could play a positive role in developing financial instruments that would allow smaller contractors (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) to pursue government work while protecting the government in the event that the contractor fails to perform the work.

## Positive action

Joint action on the part of the federal and Manitoba governments, the private sector, and the Aboriginal community can lead to the development of an Aboriginal venture capital fund that will fill an important niche in the Manitoba capital market. Labour-sponsored investment funds and jointly-trusteed pension funds can play a positive role in increasing Aboriginal access to capital.

The newly formed Manitoba angel organizations can play an important role in providing investment and management to Aboriginal business.

The Manitoba government can take the lead in exploring alternative bonding strategies with the Communities Economic Development Fund.

### 3.2.3 Aboriginal Business Zones

First Nation governments and organizations attempting to increase the level of local economic activity must deal with the barriers created by their remoteness from markets, suppliers, and sources of investment.

One concept, which has been utilized effectively in Saskatchewan, is that of an urban reserve. After reaching an agreement with municipal governments, a First Nation purchases land in the municipality that it develops as an industrial park and the land is designated as a part of the First Nation's reserve. The municipality provides the usual municipal services but does not tax the reserve. Instead, it receives a fee equal to what the municipality would have received if the land were taxed. Status Indians who worked for businesses located in the urban reserve retain their non-tax status with regards to federal income tax. It is important to recognize that the reserves remain commercial—not residential—and continues to be governed by the municipality's zoning regulations.

Unfortunately, the term reserve, which is associated with rural residential development, often fails to communicate a clear public image of the reality of an urban reserve. A more appropriate term would be an Aborignal Business Zone (ABZ). This is the term that PEAC recommends be used to describe these initiatives. This name is preferable because, while these zones are established by First Nations, they can become centres of development for all Aboriginal businesses.

While most of the tenants in such zones are Aboriginal organizations or Aboriginal-owned businesses, non-Aboriginal entrepreneurs can establish businesses in such zones. Bringing Aboriginal businesses together provides certain economies of scale and, potentially common access to suppliers and markets.

Urban Aboriginal Business Zones create opportunities for First Nations:

- to improve the economic self-sufficiency of their communities through wealth creation activities.
- to increase employment opportunities for First Nations populations.
- to increase the number of successful of First Nations owned businesses.
- to establish a revenue stream from the urban community to the home community, which can be used to increase local economic activity.

At the same time, the local municipality stands to gain from increased revenue, increased demand for professional services, and increased property values.

### Aboriginal Business Incubators

The creation of an Aboriginal Business Incubator would be a creative first step towards the establishment of an Aboriginal Business Zone. The recent success of the U of M SmartPark

demonstrates the value of a business incubator that provides a variety of services to start-up companies and more mature companies under one roof. Situated in small industrial parks, such incubators, with their fully equipped offices and laboratories, affordable rents, and access to finance and mentoring, can reduce costs and create convenient access to services and clientele. Incubators can play host to fledgling Aboriginal companies until they can stand on their own. Typically, the firms agree to assign a portion of their profits to the incubator as a return for the support that it provided during the start up stage.

A Winnipeg-based incubator might also provide satellite service in rural and northern Aboriginal communities. This could be done through cooperation with the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce and the local Chambers of Commerce and with Manitoba Industry, Economic Development and Mines. The Summit also identified a need in some Aboriginal communities for a much more modest level of assistance—the construction of secure structures where small business operators could safely store their tools and equipment.

### Positive Action

The initiative for the positive development of Aboriginal Business Zones lies with First Nations organizations and municipalities. There are positive models in both Saskatchewan and the United States. Business, labour, and government can play a significant role as potential investors and as public advocates to ensure that the public at large properly understands the concept and its benefits. Successful cooperation in this area will benefit Manitoba for many years to come.

The development of an Aboriginal business incubator has been a part of the vision for Aboriginal development in Manitoba for many years. Aboriginal businesses and investment organizations, the broader private sector, the labour movement, and government can play a role in making the sorts of investments that would be needed to establish such an incubator in the context of an Aboriginal Business Zone. As the emerging voice of the Aboriginal business community, the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce can play an important role establishing Aboriginal Business Zones. Again, the establishment of a single public message about the benefits of this initiative will be a key activity that can be supported by the leading partners in the Manitoba economy.

### 3.2.4 Creating the conditions for joint ventures and partnerships

An effective Manitoba Aboriginal procurement strategy is likely to hasten the development of joint ventures and partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ventures in Manitoba. Such ventures can also be fostered by trade shows that promote, market and demonstrate Aboriginal products and services to non-Aboriginal markets, trade shows that showcase the potential of partnerships with

Aboriginal enterprises, and by participation in trade missions.

Through the Summit process itself many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal business leaders became aware of the growing potential for joint action and activity. Activities that bring these two communities together are likely to further increase awareness and create the sorts of networks that will lead to fruitful collaboration. A particularly positive development is the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce's decision to include a component on Aboriginal business development and joint ventures in its seminar series for small and medium enterprises. The WCC has also indicated that it intends to publicize Aboriginal business success stories in its publications.

The newly created Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce is well-positioned to play a key role in developing linkages between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal business, serving as a clearing house for information on Aboriginal businesses and potential joint ventures. Local chambers of commerce can also play an important role in building these linkages.

### Positive Action

Trade shows that showcase Aboriginal goods, services, and partnership, and the inclusion of Aboriginal business people on provincial trade missions can increase the level of joint ventures, cooperation, and networking between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal businesses in Manitoba.

Similarly, increased Aboriginal participation in local chambers of commerce—facilitated by efforts to recruit Aboriginal representatives to local chambers—is likely to result in increased economic partnership and joint economic activity and is strongly endorsed.

Finally, the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce is encouraged to take on a leadership role in developing partnerships and serving as an information clearinghouse on Aboriginal businesses in Manitoba. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal businesses are encouraged to participate in the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce's seminars on Aboriginal business development and joint partnership.

### 3.2.5 Mentorship

An experienced businessperson who chooses to act as a mentor to a newly created or expanding business can provide valuable assistance. The mentor acts as a sounding board, sharing experience, skills and contacts. Such assistance is of particular importance to the Aboriginal business community. Summit participants identified a need to expand access to mentors who can provide ongoing guidance. Summit participants believed there was a need for expanded mentoring opportunities for Aboriginal businesses throughout Manitoba. The Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre, a partnership between the governments of Canada and Manitoba and five private sector partners offers a variety of supports to business, including an Aboriginal Business Service

Network dedicated to helping new and existing Aboriginal entrepreneurs. The Centre could play an important role in linking Aboriginal entrepreneurs and appropriate mentors.

### Positive Action

There is a need for support for business mentoring that brings Aboriginal entrepreneurs together with experienced operators, particularly from similar sectors. Manitoba business operators—both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal—can play an important role by participating in this process by taking on the role of mentor.

## 3.2.6 Aboriginal tourism

Summit participants viewed Aboriginal tourism as a significant sector for future development and identified the need for measures to coordinate and develop this sector. Manitoba has a number of components of a successful Aboriginal tourism industry in place, including successful lodges, attractions, hotels, and resorts. The next step is to develop additional Aboriginal tourism products and to market them broadly. In conjunction with members of the Aboriginal community, the Manitoba government has developed an Aboriginal tourism strategy. The strategy's objectives include increasing Aboriginal employment and business opportunities in the tourism industry and enhancing the existing Aboriginal tourism product. To do this, the strategy focuses on creating a critical mass of attractions that centre on existing developments and attractions, training of management, staff and entrepreneurs, and domestic and international marketing. The strategy also includes a commitment to Aboriginal control, community-based development, and maintaining cultural integrity.

### Positive Action

Along with Aboriginal entrepreneurs, communities, and Aboriginal development organizations, the Manitoba government is encouraged to continue with the implementation of its Aboriginal Tourism Strategy. This strategy will create significant opportunities for other private and public sector partners including the federal government, the City of Winnipeg, hotel and resort chains, resource industries, and commercial associations such as chambers of commerce. Tourism and tourism related boards could also increase awareness of Aboriginal tourism opportunities by recruiting Aboriginal entrepreneurs to their membership and their board. PEAC believes that in the ongoing partnership building process, the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce can play a key role in the coordination of the development of the Aboriginal tourism sector.

# 4 Creating a representative workforce

Summit participants saw the creation of a representative workforce as being fundamental to Manitoba's social and economic future. Increasing Aboriginal educational attainment and decreasing Aboriginal unemployment is a central task for the coming years if Manitoba is to develop a truly representative workforce. Creating such a workforce is desirable for a variety of reasons: for example, it will allow employers greater understanding of potential markets, it will give them access to new talent pools, and it will contribute to a healthier and more dynamic provincial society. We cannot rely solely on increased immigration to fill the vacancies occurring in the workforce, particularly the need for skilled workers in rural and Northern Manitoba.

As the Manitoba government's *Action Strategy for Economic Growth* and the Premier's Economic Advisory Council have both noted, Manitoba's economic growth depends on a growing and trained workforce. With both the private and public sector workforce aging, a looming shortage of professionals and skilled tradespeople is causing great concerns for employers across the province. At the same time Aboriginal people are participating in the workforce at far higher levels than in the past. Within a decade they will account for a quarter of the new entrants into the workforce. These trends provide Manitoba with a tremendous opportunity and a tremendous challenge.

Three key areas for action emerged from the Summit discussions on Aboriginal participation in the Manitoba workforce. These were the importance of training, and the need for specific measures to recruit and retain Aboriginal workers, and the need for improved cross-cultural awareness.

## 4.1 Training

The Premier's Economic Advisory Council has stressed the need to "Educate, train and retrain Manitoba workers, utilizing a variety of methods, for jobs that are specifically relevant to

Manitoba's economy." For this reason, the first element of Manitoba's Action Plan for Economic Growth is Education First. PEAC believes that this emphasis is crucial to creating a representative Aboriginal workforce.

Education and training can allow Aboriginal people access to a wide range of employment opportunities in Manitoba in coming years. For Aboriginal employment rates to continue to improve, there will need to be continued support for Aboriginal children, Aboriginal families, and Aboriginal communities. Traditions of lifelong learning must be encouraged and promoted to create sustainable careers for members of the growing Aboriginal workforce.

PEAC recognizes that matters of community development, social services, and education policy are beyond its mandate and expertise. The relationship, for example, between early childhood development and long-term economic success is significant. Similarly, access to a variety of family supports, such as childcare, and the local availability of training determine the ability of many Aboriginal people to participate in the workforce. This can be particularly critical for Aboriginal women given the significant number of Aboriginal single-parent families in the Aboriginal community. While PEAC is making no specific recommendations on these issues, it stresses that Summit participants spoke of the need for policies that foster family and community wellness and the traditional role that Elders can play in providing knowledge and guidance.

### 4.1.1 Career planning and high school graduation

The one area of education policy that PEAC does intend to comment on is career planning. As noted above, it is extremely important that steps be taken to stress the value of education and high-school graduation. For example, Manitoba's Aboriginal Education Action Plan has at its first objective an increase in high school graduation rates, noting that "Provincial efforts to increase graduation rates need to be more focused and more effort needs to be made to link initiatives with Manitoba First Nation schools."

One tool that Manitoba schools can use to assist young Aboriginal people to begin to plan their working lives is the Blueprint for Life/Work Designs. The Blueprint is a curriculum that starts from the perspective that life and work are intertwined and that each Canadian, whether or not they work in the professions, has a career. The Blueprint for Life/Designs allows students to map out the life and work skills they need to manage a lifelong career building process.

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth has approved the Blueprint for use in Manitoba schools. The department has also identified career development as a priority, and provides a credit for it in Senior Years. While the Blueprint needs to be simplified and revised to include an Aboriginal perspective, it is a valuable tool. Used along with the Guiding Circles career development resource, which is promoted through the Partners for Careers resource centre network, it could play a useful role in assisting

young Aboriginal students in continuing their high-school education through to graduation and in promoting the value of lifelong learning.

Junior Achievement's program The Economics of Staying in School is another resource that could be adapted for an Aboriginal context and used to encourage Aboriginal students to complete their high-school educations.

### Positive action

The Manitoba government could simplify the Blueprint for Life/Work Designs, incorporating an Aboriginal perspective and encourage its use throughout the school system. Public-school administrators could encourage the use of the program as a part of an overall approach to career development. Schools could also make increased use of Junior Achievement's The Economics of Staying in School.

## 4.1.2 Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship is a low-cost form of training that provides access to well-paid employment in over 50 trades in Manitoba. Through apprenticeship programs workers receive on-the-job training that leads to certification as a journeyperson.

The Manitoba Government's Apprenticeship Branch is developing partnerships with a number of northern and Aboriginal communities to deliver relevant training to fill the need for skilled journeypersons. Under this initiative community-sponsored apprentices gain on-the-job experience in their communities and usually do not have to leave home to take the regular technical training component of their trade. Because students do not have to leave their home communities, the apprentices are more likely able to complete the training. The new University College of the North is predicated on this premise and is expanding campuses in the North to provide more community based training.

Recently concluded collective agreements for the proposed Wuskwatim generating station and the expansion of the Red River Floodway also focus on Aboriginal apprenticeship opportunities.

The Summit participants stressed the importance of increased Aboriginal access to apprenticeship training. It was felt that if young people were provided with skills training in their community, they would be more likely to stay in the community and participate in its economic development. They encouraged the creation of partnerships between government and the private sector to create career paths for Aboriginal trades workers and stressed the need to ensure that public schools provide student with the skills they require to move into trades. Emphasis was also placed on the importance of identifying potential apprenticeship possibilities in Aboriginal communities in recognition of the fact that many small projects could provide apprenticeship training.

Private sector firms can assist with apprenticeship by ensuring, where possible, that their on-the-job training and development programs match the requirements of provincial apprenticeship programs.

### Positive action

Government, employers, and communities are encouraged to make further efforts to identify opportunities for community-based apprenticeship training, to ensure that where possible, on-the-job training assists employees towards apprenticeship certification. Finally, it is recommended that future large-scale projects have labour-project agreements that make provision for Aboriginal hiring and training.

### 4.1.3 Partnership

The private sector and public sector can play important roles in helping Aboriginal people develop needed workplace skills. IBM Canada Limited has provided an example of the role that the private sector can play in increasing the participation of Aboriginal people in Manitoba's economy. As a part of its commitment to work with the Aboriginal community, it is providing technology and program materials for youth and adult programs on the Sandy Bay, Fairford, and War Lake First Nation communities. It is also developing a career booklet that will give Aboriginal readers an appreciation of the type of work that is available in the information technology industry. IBM and the Manitoba government are also exploring ways to implement remote learning initiatives using advanced technology. Similarly the Manitoba Contact Customer Association and Regional Health Authorities across the province have signed agreements with the province to increase their Aboriginal employment. Manitoba Hydro's commitment to Aboriginal employment includes a commitment to pre-construction training for the proposed Wuskwatim generating station.

The private sector can play an important role in encouraging young people to stay in school. This can be most effectively done by providing training opportunities and establishing pre-employment programs. A local example of such programs is the Career Exposure Project, a Project of the Aboriginal Employment Initiative, the Business Council of Manitoba (BCM), the Winnipeg Foundation, and the Winnipeg School Division. Through this project 48 students from an elementary school in inner-city Winnipeg were linked with eight BCM member firms. The students created resumes, applied for jobs, were matched with a specific firm, were interviewed, given a workplace orientation similar to one that would be given to a new employee, and then spent two days at the firm where they were exposed to four different jobs. They were then paid a ten-dollar honorarium and assisted in opening an account at Buffalo Credit Union. The project was judged to be a success and will be expanded in coming years.

The Aboriginal Employment Initiative (which is a partnership between the BCM, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, and Western Economic Diversification Canada) also works with the Winnipeg Foundation and the Winnipeg School Division to deliver Applications in Working and Learning, a professional development program

for teachers from schools with significant Aboriginal population, providing them with information as to the sorts of skills employers are seeking.

### Positive Action

Individual enterprises can play an important role in helping young Aboriginal people identify and become aware of career potentials. This assistance can be provided on a system-wide basis, as is being done by IBM, the Manitoba Customer Contact Association; provincial Regional Health Authorities, and Manitoba Hydro amongst others or on a more individual basis, as is being done by the participants in the Career Exposure Project or initiatives modelled after that project. BCM members could participate in the expanded version of the program, while non-Council members can contact the AEI for assistance in developing a similar program.

## 4.2 Hiring and retention

One of the Summit participants commented that the time had come for the Manitoba business community to roll out the corporate welcome mat for Aboriginal employees. This, in essence, is a call for all employers to develop Aboriginal human resource strategies. It should be noted that many employers have already developed such strategies, which can be of varying degrees of complexity. While such strategies would differ depending on the size, location, and activity of each firm, the following list identifies the major components of such a strategy.

### 4.2.1 Aboriginal Human Resource Strategies

An Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy depends on commitment at the senior level. This may require a formal Aboriginal strategy, a commitment of resources, the development of an Aboriginal knowledge base by senior leaders, and the establishment of networks with Aboriginal organizations.

Recruitment and retention can involve such measures as:

- identifying the barriers to recruitment
- working in collaboration with Aboriginal agencies
- implementing a targeted marketing strategy
- setting up pre-operational training plans
- setting up on-the-job upgrading
- employing an Aboriginal person as an Aboriginal human resources development officer
- creating a positive work environment. This can involve holding workshops on cultural differences and taking prompt action in the event of racist behaviour. The employer can also support the practice of traditional beliefs, and, in some cases, facilitate access to Elder services.

- Developing and implementing a plan to increase awareness among Aboriginal youth and communities regarding careers and educational entrance requirements. This can include worksite tours, trade shows, summer employment, school visits, sponsorships, and bursaries and scholarships
- Building accountability for hiring, retaining, and developing a representative workforce.
- Celebrating success by publicizing accomplishments.

Cross-cultural training that increases awareness of the cultural, economic and social situation, and perspectives of Aboriginal persons is often a crucial element of such a strategy. By providing education about the impact of colonialism, government policy, residential schools and racism on Aboriginal people, cross-cultural training can bridge cultural gaps and achieve mutual respect. It may also be appropriate to complement this with training for Aboriginal employees on the employer's operations and expectations.

The Human Resource Management Association of Manitoba (HRMAM) has formed a committee to address human resource challenges relating to Aboriginal employment that face its members, including, but not limited to recruitment and retention. The committee examining Aboriginal employment consists of over 20 members and is currently led by the Diversity Coordinator for Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation. As it continues its work, the committee is making contact with the various organizations that exist in the field of Aboriginal human relations in Manitoba. The committee will be making recommendations as to what changes HRMAM should make to its programming to address human resource issues related to Aboriginal employment.

A non-profit organization, HRMAM's 1,000 members include persons employed within the private or public service that are engaged in and responsible for part or all of the human resource management activities of their organization. The organization publishes a biannual magazine and Membership Roster and Resource Guide, holds a wide variety of educational programs and seminars, and delivers a 12-week Fundamentals of Human Resource Management course in conjunction with the University of Winnipeg and is willing to alter the curriculum to include a segment on Aboriginal hiring and retention. Many of these events are open to both HRMAM members and non-members.

With the sponsorship of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and the Government of Manitoba, the Aboriginal Employment Initiative (AEI) has created a manual for small- and medium-sized employers who are looking to hire Aboriginal employees. Called Building Bridges, it was developed in conjunction with local small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) owners, and is a concise and direct handbook that addresses many human resources issues relating to recruiting and retaining Aboriginal employees. The AEI also provides workshops and

networking opportunities to SMEs to encourage Aboriginal employment, recruitment, retention and professional development.

In the past decade a number of large Manitoba employers have also reached employment equity agreements with Aboriginal organizations such as the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. The AMC also promotes partnership development with the private, public, federal, and provincial sectors, with the objective of enhancing First Nation employment and training opportunities with organizations such a the Winnipeg Floodway Expansion, Manitoba Hydro, City of Winnipeg, Manitoba Customer Centre Association, and Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. In the case of the AMC, some of the agreements have evolved into partnership agreements under which the AMC and the employer work together to increase Aboriginal employment.

Both the federal government and the Manitoba government have employment equity programs: in the provincial civil service, the number of non-casual Aboriginal employees in Manitoba as a whole increased from 584 (4.25 per cent of the civil service) in 1993 to 1009 (8.1 per cent) in 2002 (Province of Manitoba, 2002, *Province of Manitoba: Employment Equity Program, April 1, 2001-March 31, 2002*, Winnipeg. page 4).

### Positive Action

There exists a need for coordination of organizations dealing with human resource issues relating to Aboriginal employment. Because the work currently being undertaken by the Human Resource Management Association of Manitoba has the potential to bring such coordination into existence, PEAC encourages these efforts and encourages provincial organizations that are dealing with Aboriginal employment issues to support HRMAM's work in this area.

### 4.2.2 Finding employees

Manitoba WorkinfoNET Inc. is a community-based, charitable non-profit organization. As a member of a national partnership of WorkinfoNETs (WINs), it provides online information on employment, career planning and learning opportunities across Canada. The majority of its over 1,000 members are employment service providers. Its Board of Directors has representation from the Aboriginal, disability, francophone, immigrant, youth, and rural communities. Manitoba WorkinfoNET's web sites provide a one-stop shop for all the electronic employment, career development, and labour market information that exists in Manitoba as well as links to relevant national information. It also manages a local job board that advertises job openings on behalf of companies that have entered into partnership with WorkinfoNET. Currently approximately 50 companies use this service. There is also an Aboriginal specific distribution list on which companies seeking to attract Aboriginal employees can post jobs.

### Positive action

Employers seeking to hire Aboriginal workers and Aboriginal people seeking employment are encouraged to make use of the Manitoba WorkinfoNET.

## 4.2.3 Aboriginal employment and the labour movement

Manitoba's labour movement negotiates collective agreements on behalf of approximately one third of the province's workforce. While a number of unions, usually in the construction industry, use hiring halls to dispatch members to jobs, most unions have little or no influence over hiring, which is largely a management function.

In those cases where unions do have the opportunity to influence hiring, a number of Manitoba unions can and must play a positive role in negotiating agreements that increase the hiring of Aboriginal people. The craft unions have been involved in important negotiations in recent years that could lead to a significant increase in the number of unionized Aboriginal craft workers across Manitoba. For example, the recently concluded agreements relating to the construction of the proposed Wuskwatim generating station in northern Manitoba and the expansion of the Red River Floodway make provision for the hiring of Aboriginal people. Similarly, Manitoba healthcare unions have concluded partnership agreements with regional health authorities and Aboriginal organizations to increase Aboriginal employment. These sorts of agreements demonstrate the positive role that unions can play in increasing Aboriginal employment.

Unions also play an important role in reducing labour force turnover. Through collective agreements that provide seniority rights, enhanced health benefits, improved working conditions, extended holidays, and pay increases, unions and employers are able to ensure workplace stability. Repeated studies show that when groups that had been previously under-represented in the workforce, are hired into unionized jobs, they are much more likely to stay in those jobs.

Aside from these benefits, unions can play a role in welcoming Aboriginal workers into the workforce and contributing to a positive evolution of the workplace culture. In the Maple Leaf Pork plant in Brandon, which has a significant Aboriginal workforce, the United Food and Commercial Workers hired an Aboriginal staff representative and appointed Aboriginal workers to shop steward and health-and-safety positions within the union. The Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union has hired an Aboriginal worker liaison officer to work on measures designed to increase Aboriginal employment and increase Aboriginal participation in the union.

Numerous participants in the 2004 Bridging Opportunities Summit cited the importance of identifying and overcoming cultural barriers to ensure that Aboriginal workers remain in the workplace when they are hired. Change can be most effectively managed in the workplace if employees are fully consulted on the proposed

changes and its implications. Unions provide employees with a formal voice in such situations and the collective bargaining process and memorandums of agreement provide vehicles for employers and employees to workout the implications of planned workplace changes.

### Positive action

Unions have the opportunity and the responsibility to enhance Aboriginal participation in the province's economic life by:

- Supporting programs that help Aboriginal people get work ready.
- Through their involvement with various training and apprenticeship organizations, unions can work for policies that promote cross-cultural awareness.

Unions can continue their ongoing support for Project Labour Agreements and Partnership Agreements that seek to increase Aboriginal hiring.

Unions can help keep Aboriginal people in the workforce by:

- participating in and supporting various cross-cultural awareness training initiatives that help make workplaces more welcoming to Aboriginal people
- examining their collective agreements to see how their provisions can be adapted to meet Aboriginal concerns. This might involve looking at how family leave provisions meet the needs of the extended Aboriginal family.
- Ensuring that their human rights committees and policies address the concerns of Aboriginal people. This could involve creating cross-cultural training and educational opportunities for union members and staff.
- Enhancing participation of Aboriginal workers in the union itself. This can involve making sure union members are represented on committees, on executives and staff. It may also involve setting special caucuses specifically devoted to Aboriginal issues.
- Reaching out to the Aboriginal community. Through formal and informal methods unions can work with Aboriginal organizations and Aboriginal training centres to increase knowledge of the role of unions in society.

## 4.3 Cross-cultural awareness

Much that has been described above depends on increased cross-cultural awareness. Indeed, the Summit itself was an exercise in improving cross-cultural awareness and an example of the benefits that come from such an exercise. All the measures described in this report will increase contact between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and will be more likely to succeed if participants make the effort to understand the cultural values of the people that they are hiring, working for, or doing business with. In addition

to these measures, Summit participants identified the following specific issues relating to cross-cultural awareness.

### 4.3.1 Aboriginal people and Canadian history

For much of the last century, Canadian history told the story of this country's journey from colony to nation. Aboriginal people made but the briefest of appearances in the early chapters, reappearing in 1870 and 1885 only to disappear once more from the story. Until recently, the public education system has done little to give Canadians—be they Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal—a sense that Aboriginal people have been a constant element in Canadian life. Summit participants felt it was important that the latest telling of Canadian history should help us recognize that Aboriginal people are a central and ongoing part of the Canadian story. A new history would be an important step in creating cross-cultural awareness between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Manitobans.

#### Positive action

The Manitoba social studies curriculum should ensure that the Aboriginal perspective is reflected in the teaching of Canadian history.

### 4.3.2 Celebrating success

It is equally important for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Manitobans to realize that many of the key trends in Aboriginal life in Manitoba are positive. Educational levels are improving, as are employment levels. There is an ever growing number of Aboriginal professionals and business people, a growing number of successful Aboriginal businesses and organizations. Summit participants believed that all sectors of the Manitoba community should make a commitment to publicizing the successes and the importance that education and training played in creating the opportunities for current successes. Models and mentors for young Aboriginal people, it was suggested, need to be identified and promoted.

#### Positive Action

The Manitoba public and private sector should work together cooperatively to publicize the accomplishments of Aboriginal people, the strength of Aboriginal communities, and the benefits of training and education in creating those successes. There is a particular opportunity here for Manitoba broadcasters.

To further this work, PEAC is recommending the establishment of an award program to recognize companies with significant accomplishments in the hiring of Aboriginal workers.

# 5 Reviewing provincial government programs and monitoring progress

PEAC has two final overarching recommendations. Numerous provincial government supports for Aboriginal business development or provincial efforts to increase Aboriginal workforce participations have been in place for many years. These programs have been introduced over several decades in an effort to meet a variety of identified needs. The existence of such a broad range of programs raises questions as to whether there exists overlap between current programs, whether the programs are effectively meeting their goals, and whether the needs have altered since the programs were initially introduced. The effectiveness of provincial government action in this area can also be enhanced by reporting and publication of the progress of provincial initiatives relating to Aboriginal business development and Aboriginal employment. This could take the form of a requirement that all departments make regular reports on measures relating to Aboriginal development and Aboriginal employment and that these be summarized in an annual report.

### Positive action

The Manitoba government should review its current Aboriginal business development and employment programs, assessing them for effectiveness and duplication. The goal should be to reduce the number of programs, eliminate overlap, and increase effectiveness. As a part of this review, the government should also assess whether its points of contact are Aboriginal friendly and that the staff delivering the programs have been sensitized to the issues that face Aboriginal business people and workforce members.

As a part of its commitment to implementing this report, the Manitoba government should consider requiring provincial departments to make regular reports to cabinet on measures relating to Aboriginal development and Aboriginal employment. These should be summarized in an annual report.

# References

Statistics Canada Aboriginal Entrepreneurs Survey 2002

Province of Manitoba, 2002, *Province of Manitoba: Employment Equity Program, April 1, 2001 - March 31, 2002*, Winnipeg.

Manitoba Bureau of Statistics. June 27, 2005. Manitoba Aboriginal Population Projections 2001-2017 Overview. Winnipeg.

# Appendix 1

## Manitoba Premier's Economic Advisory Council (PEAC)

The Premier's Economic Advisory Council (PEAC) is a broad-based 35-member council that provides continuing advice to the Manitoba Premier on a wide range of provincial economic priorities. The Council, whose members are invited to serve on the Council by the Premier, includes business, labour, education, community, and Aboriginal leaders. Council members serve as volunteers.

The Council is the outgrowth of the spring 2000, Manitoba Century Summit – the first forum of its kind in over 15 years. The Summit brought together a cross-section of more than 100 Manitobans to discuss strategies for expanding economic and social opportunities. Focussing on developing strategic partnerships for economic growth, the key Summit themes were labour force development, attraction and retention of investment, and promoting leading edge industries in areas such as biotechnology, information technology, and advanced manufacturing.

Following the Summit, the Premier invited 34 prominent Manitobans to form the Premier's Economic Advisory Council, which was launched in November 2001. The Council is currently co-chaired by Bob Silver (President of Western Glove) and Robert Ziegler (President of United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 832).

To facilitate wide-ranging and candid discussion, the Council is not limited by terms of reference and holds informal meetings designed to develop consensus on issues. PEAC meets three to four times a year as a full council. In addition, PEAC has established Task Groups, made up of members from PEAC and additional volunteers from the broader community to consider specific issues. The Task Groups report to PEAC, which considers their reports and, based on its review of the Task Group reports, makes recommendations to the Premier.

The initial set of recommendations from

PEAC to the Premier formed the basis for Manitoba's economic strategy entitled ***Manitoba's Action Strategy for Economic Growth.*** Recommendations have also been incorporated in Throne Speeches and Budgets.

## PEAC membership

### Co-Chairs

Bob Silver, President, Western Glove
Robert Ziegler, President UFCW Local 832

### Other Representatives

Jim August, CEO, Forks North Portage Development Corporation
Lea Baturin, National Staff Representative, Communications, Electrical, and Paperworkers Union
Daniel Paul Bork, President, Clarence Cook Consulting Inc., Vice-Chair, Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce
Jamie Brown, CEO, Frantic Films
Anita Campbell, Executive Director, Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre, Thompson
David Chartrand, President, Manitoba Métis Federation
Janice Chase, Union Representative, Service Employees International Union Local #308
Jerry Cianflone, Owner, International Pizza System
Elaine Cowan, CEO, Anokiiwin Group, former President, Aboriginal Business Leaders
Polly Craik, CEO, FineLine Integrated Response Solutions
Rob Despins, Director, General Manager, Standard Aero Corporate University, Past Chair, Manitoba Division, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters
Sylvia Farley, Executive Coordinator, Manitoba Federation of Labour
Bert Friesen, President, Genesis Venture Inc.
Richard Frost, CEO, Winnipeg Foundation
Leonard E. Harapiak, Retired, former Director, South Winnipeg Technical Institute
Joanne C. Keselman, Vice-president, Research, University of Manitoba
Doug Lauvstad, Executive Director, University of College of the North, The Pas Campus
Michael Leech, President, Leech Printing Ltd., Brandon
Chuck Loewen, President and CEO, Online Business Systems
Florfina Marcelino, Publisher/Editor, Philippine Times
Irene Merie, President, Merie and Associates, Past Chair of the Board, Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce
Allan McLeod, CEO, Tribal Council Investments Group
Ashish Modha, President and CEO, Mondetta Clothing Company
Mariette Mulaire, Executive Director, Economic Development Council for Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities-CEDM
Marcel Moody, Co-Manager, Nisichawaysihk Cree Nation, Nelson House
Judy Murphy, COO, Royal Winnipeg Ballet
Teri Nicholson, Economic Development Officer, Shoal Lake Regional Development Community Corporation, Shoal Lake
Roslyn Nugent, President, Bayridge Lumber and Forest Products
Dale Paterson, Area Director, Canadian Auto Workers Union
Harvey Secter, Dean, Faculty of Law, University of Manitoba
Ian Smith, Director General, National Research Council, Institute for Bio-Diagnostics
Kevin Strong, Manager, TSX Venture Exchange
Dave Turpie, Property Manager, City Centre Mall, Thompson

# Appendix 2

## Aboriginal Summit Steering Committee

### PEAC Members

Elaine Cowan (Co-Chair), CEO, Anokiiwin Group, former President, Aboriginal Business Leaders

Daniel Paul Bork, (Co-Chair), President, Clarence Cook Consulting Inc., Vice Chair of the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, and member of the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce

Anita Campbell, Executive Director, Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre

David Chartrand, President, Manitoba Métis Federation

Sylvia Farley, Executive Coordinator, Manitoba Federation of Labour

Bert Friesen, President, Genesys Venture Inc.

### Additional Volunteers

Arnold Asham, President, Asham Curling & Vice President, Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce

Debbie Burka, Human Resource Liaison/Special Projects, Peguis First Nation

Allan Gaudry, Fisher, St. Laurent

David Mollins, President, Protos International

Tom Nepetaypo, Government Advisor, Keewatin Tribal Council

Christian Sinclair, Director of Corporate Development, Tribal Councils Investment Group

Mike Spence, Mayor Churchill, Manitoba Hydro Board, Tourism Business Owner

John Thunder,Chief, Buffalo Point First Nation

Pat Turner, President, E.T. Development Ltd and President, Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce

# Appendix 3

## Aboriginal Summit Implementation Framework Committee

### PEAC Members

Daniel Paul Bork (Chair), President, Clarence Cook Consulting, Inc., Vice Chair of the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, and member of the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce

Anita Campbell, Executive Director, Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre

Michael Leech, President, Leech Printing Inc., Brandon

### Additional Volunteers

Arnold Asham, President, Asham Curling & Vice President, Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce

Rob Ballantyne, Assistant Executive Director, Swampy Cree Tribal Council

Al Benoit, Business Advisor, Manitoba Métis Federation

Darrell Brown, President, Kisik Inc. & Director of Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce

Loren Cisyk, IBM General Manager Manitoba & NW Ontario

Ian Cramer, Senior Business Advisor, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

Phil Dorion, CEO, Aseneskak Casino and Tribal Council Investment Group

Leah LaPlante, Vice-President, Southwest Manitoba Métis Federation, Brandon

David Mollins, President, Protos International

Mike Spence, Mayor Churchill, Manitoba Hydro Board, Tourism Business Owner

Bev Sterling, Vice President, Labour and Employee Relations, Bowes Leadership Group

Pat Turner, President, E.T. Development Ltd & President, Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce

Gord Wakeling, CEO, Communities Economic

Development Fund, Thompson

Cathy Woods, Vice President, Aboriginal Workers Caucus, Manitoba Federation of Labour

### Special Advisors

Dave Angus, President and CEO, Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce

Jim Carr, President and CEO, Manitoba Business Council

Elaine Cowan, CEO, Anokiiwin Group, former President, Aboriginal Business Leaders, PEAC member and Co-Chair of the Summit Planning Steering Committee

Darlene Dziewit, President, Manitoba Federation of Labour

Bert Friesen, President, Genesys Venture Inc., PEAC member

Tony Romeo, Director, Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre